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18 January 2013

Brendan Marley
St Stephen's RC Primary School
Chappell Road
Droylsden
Manchester
M43 7NA

Dear Mr Marley

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Stephen's RC Primary School.

Following my visit to your school on 18 January, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) met with three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and a range of documentation was reviewed, including, records of monitoring activities. Arrangements about teachers' performance management were discussed. The headteacher also took the HMI on a tour of the school.

Context

There have been no staff changes since the inspection although the governing body have made some changes and set up a new committee with a specific focus on improvement.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors accept that the outcomes and priorities from the recent inspection are the right ones. Leaders and governors all articulate an ambition to improve and have drafted action plans to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection. However, the criteria by which leaders and governors can measure how much

improvement is being made need to be sharp and precise to enable leaders, governors and teachers to have a clear understanding of what success looks like.

The governing body has taken decisive action to form an interim strategic group focused on monitoring improvements and holding the school to account. They have firm plans to develop their understanding of expectations of quality of teaching and standards of pupils' achievement. Consultants in leadership and mathematics, brokered with the local authority, have already begun work in addressing aspects for improvement identified by the inspection. Activities are underway to check teachers' planning and pupils' work and these are timetabled regularly by senior leaders. However, leaders and governors agree that these need to develop a greater focus on the impact actions are having on the quality of pupils' learning.

New performance management arrangements provide all teachers with individual targets focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress. Key Stage leaders now regularly check the work of staff. However, they are aware of the need to take greater responsibility for pupils' progress and ensure accountability to governors.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the criteria for judging progress in the school improvement plan so that leaders and governors are able to accurately evaluate the impact of the school's actions
- ensure that all monitoring activity conducted by leaders focuses on the impact these actions are having on the quality of pupils' learning.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has worked in partnership with the school to coordinate a range of useful support for staff. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership. The local authority has linked the school with a local teaching school alliance in order to help make further improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Tameside.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector